The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity
Vol 18
Pre release cover

IT STOPPED RAINING, HUH?

THANKS FOR HAVING US!

SORRY THAT THE LITTLE ONES ENDED UP GETTING IN THE WAY OF YOUR STUDY SESSION!

YOU'RE WEL-COME!

You're kidding!

HFWUUUSH

It's raining!

Mooom!

THAT'S THE RAINY SEASON FOR YOU.

IT'S FINE! PLAYING WITH THEM WAS A GREAT BREATHER FOR US!

JUST WHEN I WANTED TO TAKE THESE TWO OUT OF THE HOUSE WITH ME!

THAT SUDDEN DOWNPOUR COULDN'T HAVE ARRIVED AT A WORSE TIME...

Chapter 134: Subaru's Concerns

YOU EVEN FINISHED YOUR HOME-WORK, TOO. SUCH A GOOD GIRL.

HEE HEE!

I'M SURE YOU'RE GOING TO ACE TOMORROW'S TEST.

YUP!

HEE HEE!

AND NOW WE'RE FRIENDS! RIGHT, MAI-CHAN?

HEY! MADOKA! AYATO! RINTARO!

OH, YOU ALREADY KNOW!

THAT MATCH WAS SO MUCH FUN! LET'S HAVE ANOTHER ONE SOON!

WUEE-EEH!

I DO KNOW HOW MANY SUBJECTS YOU'RE ABOUT TO FAIL THIS TIME AROUND.

AND I'M NOT GONNA LET THAT HAPPEN. NOT AFTER I WENT OUT OF MY WAY TO TEACH YOU.

You're not playing games when I'm around.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME STUDY, MY DARLING DEAR SAKU-CHAN! I APPRECIATE YOU A WHOOOLE LOT! ♡

WILL DO! THANK YOU!

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR STUDIES, EVERYONE! FEEL FREE TO STOP BY AGAIN ONCE YOU FIND THE TIME.

ALL RIGHT!

I'VE GOT TIME, SO I'LL WALK THEM TO THE STATION.

WE'LL GIVE IT OUR BEST!

ALL RIGHT, FOLKS! I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME TO SAY GOODBYE!

ばいばい Bye bye!

...

I MISS THEM ALREADY...

DAW, I WANTED TO PLAY SOME MORE.

...BUT I BELIEVE THAT, NO MATTER WHICH PATH HE MIGHT CHOOSE...

OF COURSE. WE CAN'T SAY SO WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY...

TRUE, TRUE!

HE JUST MANAGES TO CHEER UP THE ROOM SIMPLY BY BEING HIMSELF, RIGHT?

OUT OF ALL OF US...

...AND PULLS THE REST OF US ALONG WITH HIM.

HE'S ALWAYS HONEST. ALWAYS GENUINE, AND DOESN'T DARE TO TELL A LIE. HE TAKES THAT FIRST IMPORTANT STEP...

...ABSOLUTELY HAS TO BE USAMI.

...THE ONE WHO'S MOST AMAZING...

THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY HE IS.

HE'S GOING TO ABSOLUTELY CRUSH IT AND FIND HIS OWN SUCCESS.

HE'S HELPED ME COUNTLESS TIMES SO FAR.

YEAH, THEY'RE RIGHT.

HE'S LIKE THE GLUE THAT KEPT US TOGETHER IN THE FIRST PLACE.

...THAT WAS ALL THANKS TO USAMI-KUN.

TO THINK HIS CLASSMATES WOULD FEEL THAT WAY.

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT.

...WHO DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH FAITH IN HIM.

I GUESS... I WAS THE ONE...

Pretty bad, right?

Heh... hee hee...

Can... Can you even get into any high school with these grades?!

I'M AWARE THAT I WORRY ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS ALL THE TIME.

...WOULD ALWAYS BE THE NONCHALANT TYPE.

Are you sure...?

IT'S SHOHEI! HE'S GONNA BE FINE!

CONTRARY TO THAT, HIS FATHER...

AT FIRST, IT SOUNDED LIKE COMPLETE NONSENSE TO ME.

BUT TO BE HONEST, HE DID HAVE A POINT.

HE'S SUCH A GREAT GUY, AFTER ALL!

ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY HIS FRIENDS.

HE REALLY TOOK AFTER HIS FATHER.

SO WHEN I SAW HIS FATHER NOT BEING CONCERNED IN THE SLIGHTEST...

...I FIGURED IT MUST HAVE BEEN BECAUSE THEY RESEMBLE EACH OTHER SO MUCH.

...WHILE BEING SUPPORTED BY THE PEOPLE HE WAS BLESSED WITH.

IN FACT, HIS FATHER ALSO MANAGED TO SOMEWHAT FIND HIS PATH IN LIFE...

...AND THEY ALL HAD SUCH WONDERFUL THINGS TO SAY ABOUT HIM.

...BUT I BELIEVE THAT, NO MATTER WHICH PATH WE MIGHT TAKE...

OF COURSE, WE CAN'T SAY SO WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY...

OUT OF ALL OF US...

...ABSOLUTELY HAS TO BE USAMI.

...THE ONE WHO'S MOST AMAZING...

YET HERE WE ARE...

THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY HE IS.

HE'S GOING TO ABSOLUTELY CRUSH IT AND FIND HIS OWN SUCCESS.

HE ALWAYS MANAGES TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER.

NO MATTER THE SITUATION HE'S IN.

JUST HOW INCREDIBLE HE IS.

WE ALL KNOW...

...AND I'M NOT AS STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND POSITIVE LIKE HIS FATHER IS...

I MAY BE A BIT OF A PESSIMIST...

WELL...

MAYBE I COULD GIVE HIM A LITTLE BIT MORE TIME.

ぽふ
POMF

THEIR SKILLS AND TALENTS...

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO MY CHILDREN...

WHAT'S WRONG?

MAMA?

I'M CONFI-DENT...

...I KNOW THEM BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.

ALL RIGHT, BACK INSIDE WITH YOU TWO!

I SWEAR... IT'S TOUGH BEING A MOM!

HUUUH?

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT??

ぴっかーん!!

GLE

AM

CAN'T BLAME HIM AFTER ALL THE PRAISE HE'S GOTTEN FROM EVERY-ONE!

SOME-ONE'S IN A GOOD MOOD...

I GOTTA ADMIT, I'M IMPRESSED YOU ACTUALLY STUDIED TOGETHER WITH MAI-CHAN.

I THOUGHT YOU'D JUST GOOF OFF AND PLAY GAMES INSTEAD.

CAN'T EXACTLY DO THAT WITH SAKU BREATHING DOWN MY NECK, Y'KNOW.

EX-CUSE ME?

Stop lying.

TRUEEE!

THAT'S VERY RESPECTABLE OF YOU. THEY ARE LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH A GREAT OLDER BROTHER.

THOUGH, TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST...

...WHILE MY LITTLE SISTER IS GIVING IT HER ALL.

PLUS, I'D BE A PRETTY LAME OLDER BRO IF I'D JUST LAZE AROUND...

YOU DON'T LOOK WORRIED WHATSOEVER THOUGH.

FWP

Is it just me, or are they even tougher than usual?!

I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE LAZY WITH THOSE DANG EXAMS COMING UP!

KEEP TALKING LIKE THAT AND YOU WON'T BE GETTING ANY HELP FROM HIM ANYMORE.

SOMEONE'S GETTING USED TO TEACHING US, EH?

ALSO, CAN YOU HELP ME OUT, TOO, SAKU-KUN?

SURE. WE CAN JUST MEET UP WITHOUT SHOHEI.

GAA-AH!

I'm sowwy!

I CAN CHECK OVER IT AT SCHOOL TOMORROW IF YOU'D LIKE.

FOR REAL? YOU'RE THE BEST!

THAT SAID, I GET WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM. I'M STILL UNSURE ABOUT A WHOLE BUNCH OF STUFF.

NOW THAT WE'RE ON THAT TOPIC...

I'd be way too anxious to just let it slide

THAT IS... RATHER IMPRESSIVE ON ITS OWN.

I'M SERIOUSLY IMPRESSED WITH YOU GUYS, THOUGH!

WHENEVER I'M STUCK SOMEWHERE, I'D JUST LEAVE IT BE AND MOVE ON, HOPING IT'LL WORK ITSELF OUT NATURALLY.

Agreed!

I do that sometimes!

SAME HERE!

WHY AM I EVEN TEACHING THIS GUY...

HUH? ME?

DON'T YOU GUYS FEEL LIKE YUZUHARA-SAN AND SHOHEI SERIOUSLY RESEMBLE EACH OTHER?

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I FEEL LIKE I'M DEALING WITH A SHOHEI DUO, YEAH.

I DO REMEMBER YOU TWO GETTING ALONG QUICKLY, TOO.

SOUNDS EVEN MORE CONVINCING NOW THAT SHOHEI'S ON BOARD.

WE'RE BOTH RUNNING ON THE SAME LEVEL OF ENERGY!

OH, I KINDA GET IT!

HE'S GOT A POINT, YOU KNOW?

YEAAAH!☆

SO THAT MEANS... YOU'RE JUST AS AMAZING AS I, THE GREAT SHOHEI?!

OH, PLEASE!

THE PRAISE IS GETTING TO HIS HEAD...

Not much thought going through my brain! That's all!

I'M JUST MORE OF A PLAIN GAL, IF YOU CATCH MY DRIFT.

YOU GUYS ARE EXAGGE-RATING!

PLUS, I DON'T HAVE A BIG HEART LIKE HE DOES!

I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH PRAISE FOR HIM FOR THE NEXT YEAR OR SO. THINGS ARE GETTING DANGEROUS.

THIS BIG! YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT!

SAY WHAT?! HOW BIG IS MY BIG HEART?!

FWP

HM?

...

HUH?

PSSST, HOSHINA-SAN!

WHISPER

WHY NOT SKIP THE MIDDLEMAN...

AND ASK HIM DIRECTLY?

...

Too late, huh?

Whoops, the light turned red while we were talking.

I GUESS I SHOULD...

WAP

I...

!

WHAT'S UP?!

SWISH

YO, USAMI. THERE'S ONE THING I WAS WONDERING...

BUT... NOT WITH EVERYONE ELSE LISTENING...

...!

TAT

NA...

I WAS... CURIOUS ABOUT SOMETHING YOU SAID EARLIER...

YEAH?

REALLY? WHICH IS?

WELL...

NATSU-SAWA-KUN...!

...?

UM...

IT'S...

HUH?

WH-WHICH UNIVER-SITY...

DO YOU PLAN ON ATTENDING AFTER GRADUAT-ING?!

ERR...

HAVEN'T DECIDED YET, TO BE HONEST.

YOU WEREN'T SURE ABOUT T-UNIVER-SITY...

EVEN WHILE TRYING OUT THEIR MOCK EXAMS, RIGHT?

THAT... MAKES SENSE.

OH...

I SEE...

NO, IT'S FINE...

I GUESS I JUST ASSUMED THAT YOU'D BE GOING THERE NOW... I'M SORRY.

WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU MADE UP WITH HIDAKA-KUN...

...

GOT-CHA...

I... I GUESS SO, YEAH...

UM...

HUH...?!

COULD IT BE THAT YOU WERE... WORRIED ABOUT ME? SINCE I HAVEN'T MADE UP MY MIND YET?

SORRY IF I'M INTERPRET-ING THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT...

OH, THE LIGHT'S GREEN.

...

BUT IT'S FINE. I'LL FIND MY WAY EVENTUALLY.

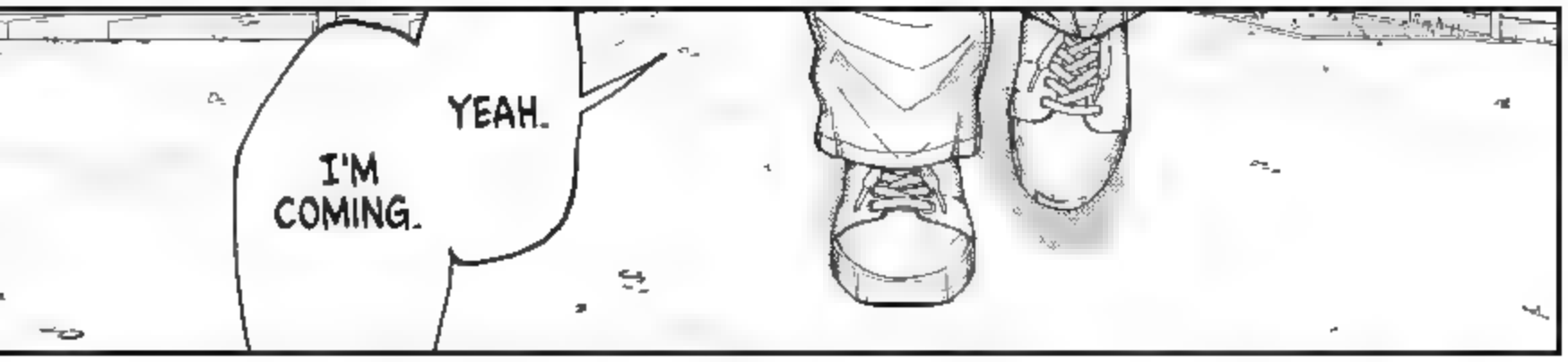
It'll all work itself out, right?

THANKS. I APPRECIATE IT.

HOSHINA-SAN?

...

EVERYONE'S GOING AHEAD, YOU KNOW?


YEAH.
I'M COMING.

AM I...
...WORRIED AFTER ALL?

HONEST-LY.

THIS SURE IS A SURPRISE.

...

I MEAN, I WOULD UNDERSTAND IF THIS WAS ABOUT KAORUKO-SAN...

BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE ASKING ME ABOUT NATSUSAWA'S PLANS.

HUH?

...

LET ALONE THE FACT THAT YOU ACTIVELY APPROACHED ME ABOUT IT, EVEN ASSUMING YOU WERE CURIOUS ABOUT HIS CIR-CUMSTANCES.

AM I WORRIED...

BECAUSE WE'RE FRIENDS?

I SHOULD BE HAPPY FOR HIM.

AS LONG AS HE CHOOSES A PATH THAT HE WON'T REGRET...

BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY RIGHT TO TRY AND PERSUADE HIM.

I... SEE...

SO WE'RE NOT...

WALKING DOWN THE SAME PATH, AFTER ALL...

NAAA-TSUUU-SAAA-WAAA...

BEING THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS.

ONLY ONE WEEK IS LEFT UNTIL THE FINAL EXAMS OF THEIR FIRST TERM...

I DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M CONFUSED ABOUT ANY-MORE...

C'MON, BRO...DID WE ACTUALLY GO THROUGH THIS STUFF IN CLASS...?

SAVE ME... PLEASE... TEACH ME SOME MORE...

I'M AT MY LIMIT... MY HEAD'S GONNA EXPLODE...

YOU GUYS...

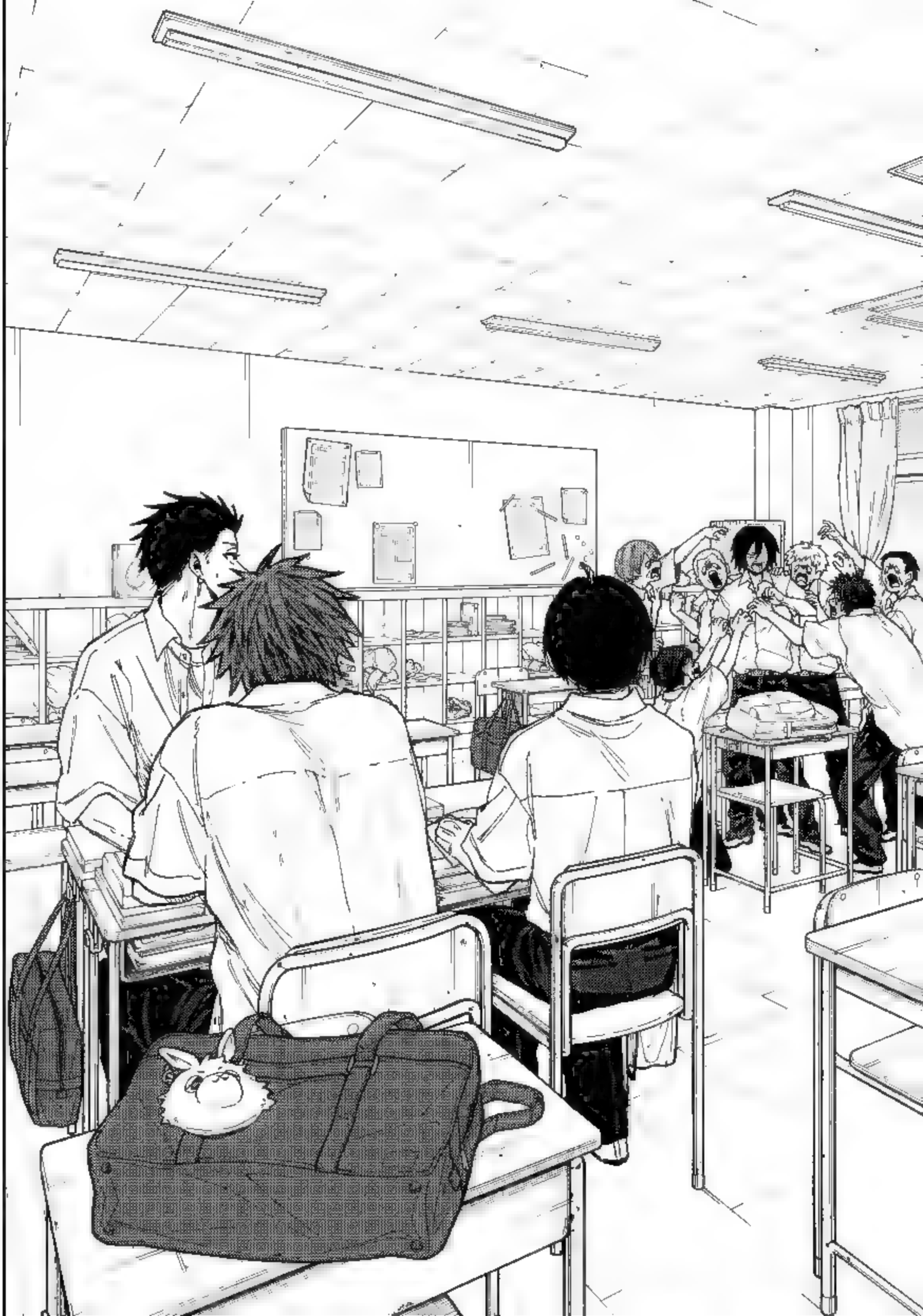
...!

FLINCH

Get away from me, you braindead zombies!

YOU DID THIS TO YOURSELVES AFTER SLEEPING THROUGH ALL THOSE DAMN CLASSES!

Chapter 135: Final Exams of the First Term



Let! Me! Goooo!

Oh, no...

What if it's conta-gious?

SAKU'S GONNA GET MUNCHED UP BY ZOMBIES AT THIS RATE...

I DO THINK THEY'RE RELYING ON HIM WAY TOO MUCH. MAYBE I SHOULD GIVE THEM A STERN TALKING-TO LATER.

YET HE'LL STILL TEACH THEM ANYWAY... MAN, WHAT A GREAT GUY.

HOW THINGS ENDED UP LIKE THAT...

SURE, I GUESS I CAN...

NATSUSAWA! WE BEG YOU! PLEASE TEACH US, TOO!

THEY COULD HAVE STARTED EARLIER THAN JUST FOR THE FINAL STRETCH BEFORE THE EXAMS.

NO COMMENT OVER HERE... HAHA...

I'VE HAD IT WITH THESE GUYS!

SLAM

...

WOWSERS, LOOK AT THAT FACE!

YOU'D ALWAYS HAVE THAT LOOK WHEN YOU WERE TEACHING ME AGES AGO! MAN, THIS TAKES ME BACK!

NOT AS OF LATE, THOUGH. GUESS THAT MEANS YOU IMPROVED?

MY OWN HEAD'S GONNA BURST AT THIS RATE!

OHHH, I SEE...

And right while I'm thinking about how to help one guy, another calls out to me. It's so frustrating sometimes!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT PORTIONS THEY STRUGGLE WITH THE MOST, SO IT'S HARD TO TELL WHERE TO START.

UNLIKE WITH THE THREE OF YOU, I ONLY JUST STARTED TEACHING THEM, RIGHT?

OUCH?!

I HAVE NO REBUTTAL...

THEY'RE NOT AS BAD AS RINTARO AND SHOHEI WERE BEFORE, BUT...

Mhm...

BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW IS EVERYONE ELSE DOING?

I GOT IT MOSTLY MARKED DOWN.

PHEW...

THAT SAID...

I THINK WE'LL BE FINE.

GOTCHA.

LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED ANY ASSISTANCE, YEAH?

YEAH, YEAH...

FLAK

NATSU-SAWAAA! HEEELP!

HE'S GOTTEN WAAAY BETTER AT TEACHING, RIGHT? CAN'T BELIEVE THAT'S THE SAME GUY WE MADE FUN OF!

HE SEEMS TO HAVE SOFTENED UP A LOT MORE, TOO.

THOUGH, YOU'RE RIGHT.

What a back-handed compli-ment...

Yeesh...

GENIUSES LIKE HIM LIVE ON A WHOLE DIFFERENT PLANE OF EXISTENCE FROM US.

NEVER WOULD HAVE IMAGINED HIM TO TURN OUT LIKE THIS, TO BE HONEST.

...BUT RIGHT NOW, IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE HATES THE IDEA OF TEACHING OTHERS.

BEFORE, IT FELT LIKE HE FORCED HIMSELF TO DO IT FOR "OUR SAKE"...

PRESUM... POMPOUS?

...

...

?

Ha ha ha!

YEAH, NO WAY! HOW PRESUMPTUOUS OF ME TO EVEN JOKE ABOUT THAT.

MAYBE HE COULDN'T KEEP WATCHING HOW PATHETIC WE WERE AND SWITCHED TO THIS KIND OF DIFFERENT APPROACH?

BUT I THINK WE SHOULD PROBABLY WORRY ABOUT OURSELVES FOR THE TIME BEING.

I can already see it, yup.

WELL, HE'LL TOTALLY ROCK IT NO MATTER WHERE HE GOES, I'M SURE.

I WONDER WHAT UNIVERSITY HE'LL GO WITH!

...

PSSSHH
KCHAK
WUEH ...?!
HOSHINA-SAN...?
YOU... NEED SOME-THING?
KATAK
...

Where's your bathroom again?

Out the door and then right!

AND SO, I FIGURED IT'D BE MY CHANCE TO TALK TO YOU WITHOUT THE OTHERS...

I HAPPENED TO SEE YOU HEADING TO THE BATHROOM EARLIER...

WELL...

!

...I WAS WAITING FOR YOU HERE.

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO ASK YOU...

WHICH IS WHY...

IT'S JUST...

...?

WELL...

UM...

SOME-THING YOU WANTED TO ASK ME?

I...

...!

...

GRIP

WAP

I WANTED TO THANK YOU!

...FOR HELPING KAORUKO!

HUH?!

...!

THAT'S... RIGHT...

OH, THIS IS ABOUT KAORUKO-SAN...?

KAORUKO TOLD YOU ABOUT HER DREAM OF BECOMING AN OBSTETRICIAN-GYNECOLOGIST, RIGHT?

THE TWO OF US MET UP THE NIGHT OF THE NEXT DAY.

AND THAT'S WHEN...

SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO GET INTO A MED SCHOOL.

AS WELL AS...

...THAT IT WAS YOU WHO...

GAVE HER THE FINAL PUSH SHE NEEDED.

...

I ALWAYS HAD A FEELING THAT...

THERE WAS SOMETHING GLUED TO THE BACK OF HER MIND... LIKE SHE WAS HESITATING.

I THINK SUBARU SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME FROM THE BEGINNING.

BE IT THE REASON FOR HER INTEREST IN THAT FIELD...

...OR HER WISH TO BECOME A DOCTOR LIKE THAT, SHE HADN'T TOLD ME BEFORE THAT DAY.

I JUST REMEMBER SEEING HOW...

SHE WAS PRACTICALLY GLUED TO A PART OF A BOOK THAT TALKED ABOUT THAT SORT OF WORK.

AND SO, I KIND OF PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER... THAT SHE MIGHT WANT TO BE SOMEONE LIKE THAT IN THE FUTURE.

SHE'S REALLY KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON KAORUKO-SAN...

I SEE...

NOR DID I HAVE ANY RIGHT TO TELL HER WHAT TO DO.

THAT SAID, I COULDN'T EXACTLY ASK HER ABOUT IT...

...AND TOLD YOU ABOUT WHAT'S BOTHERING HER, HUH?

...TO YOU...

SO, SHE CAME CLEAN...

EVEN THOUGH SHE NEVER ONCE CONSULTED ME ABOUT ANY OF THAT...

SAY WHAT?

HONESTLY, YOU CONTINUE TO AMAZE ME, TSUMUGI-KUN.

...SIGH

MMMPH

I'M A BIT... JEALOUS.

I WAS JUST JOKING

S-SORRY...?!

AH, UH

RELIEVED...?

MORE THAN ANYTHING, I'M RELIEVED.

I'M GLAD

...WHO BECAME KAORUKO'S BOYFRIEND.

I'M JUST SO GLAD THAT IT WAS YOU...

JUST ACCEPT MY COMPLIMENT. THAT'S ALL I WANT.

Hee hee...

SORRY, BUT... WHAT AM I EVEN SUPPOSED TO SAY TO THAT...?

ERM... WELL... TH-THANKS...?

...!

BA

KU

DUMP

キ...

...

THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU REALLY WANTED TO ASK ME, RIGHT?

SURE, BUT...

ACTUAL-LY...

WELL...

AND SO...

...

...ABOUT NATSUSAWA'S PLANS AND CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY.

...SHE ASKED ME IF I KNEW ANYTHING...

BUT... WHY...?! I DON'T GET IT...!

HOW COME SHE COULDN'T ASK KAORUKO-SAN WHILE ACTIVELY GOING OUT OF HER WAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NATSUSAWA?!

BUT NATSUSAWA IS NOT THE EXCEPTION HERE. SHE'S WARMED UP TO THE REST OF US, TOO...

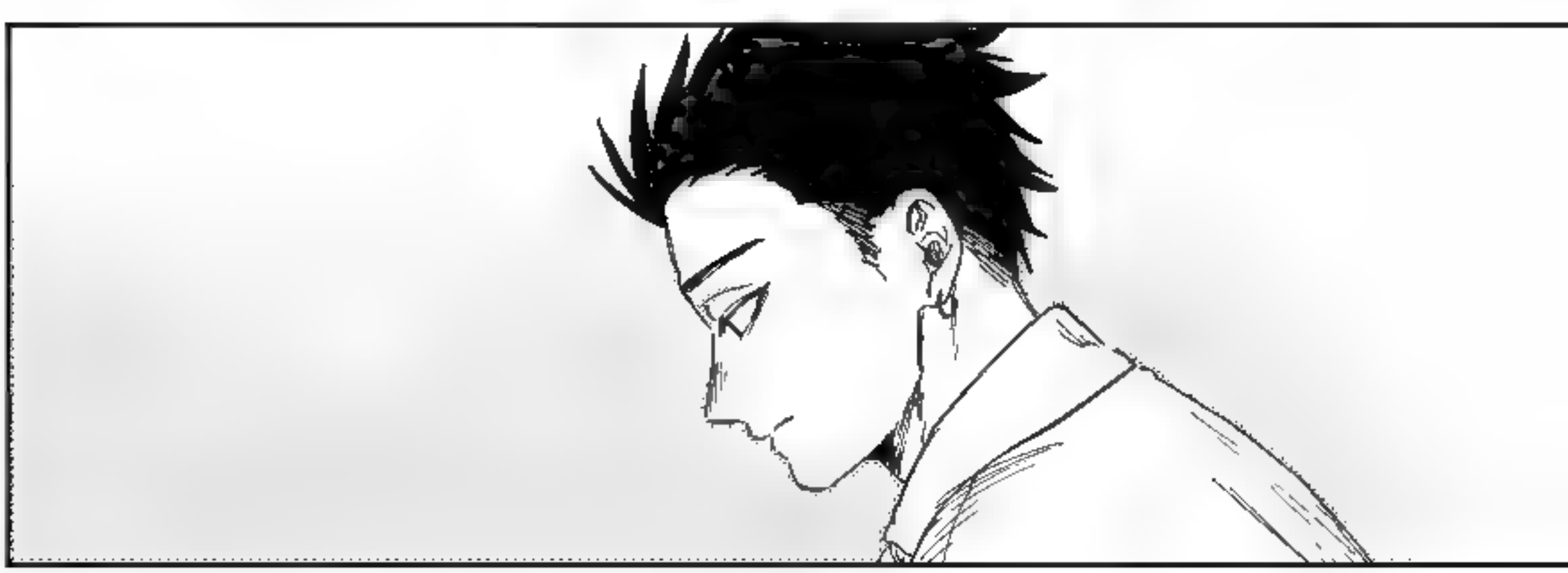
IT'S CLEAR AS DAY THAT THEY'VE GOTTEN MUCH CLOSER COMPARED TO WHEN THEY FIRST MET...

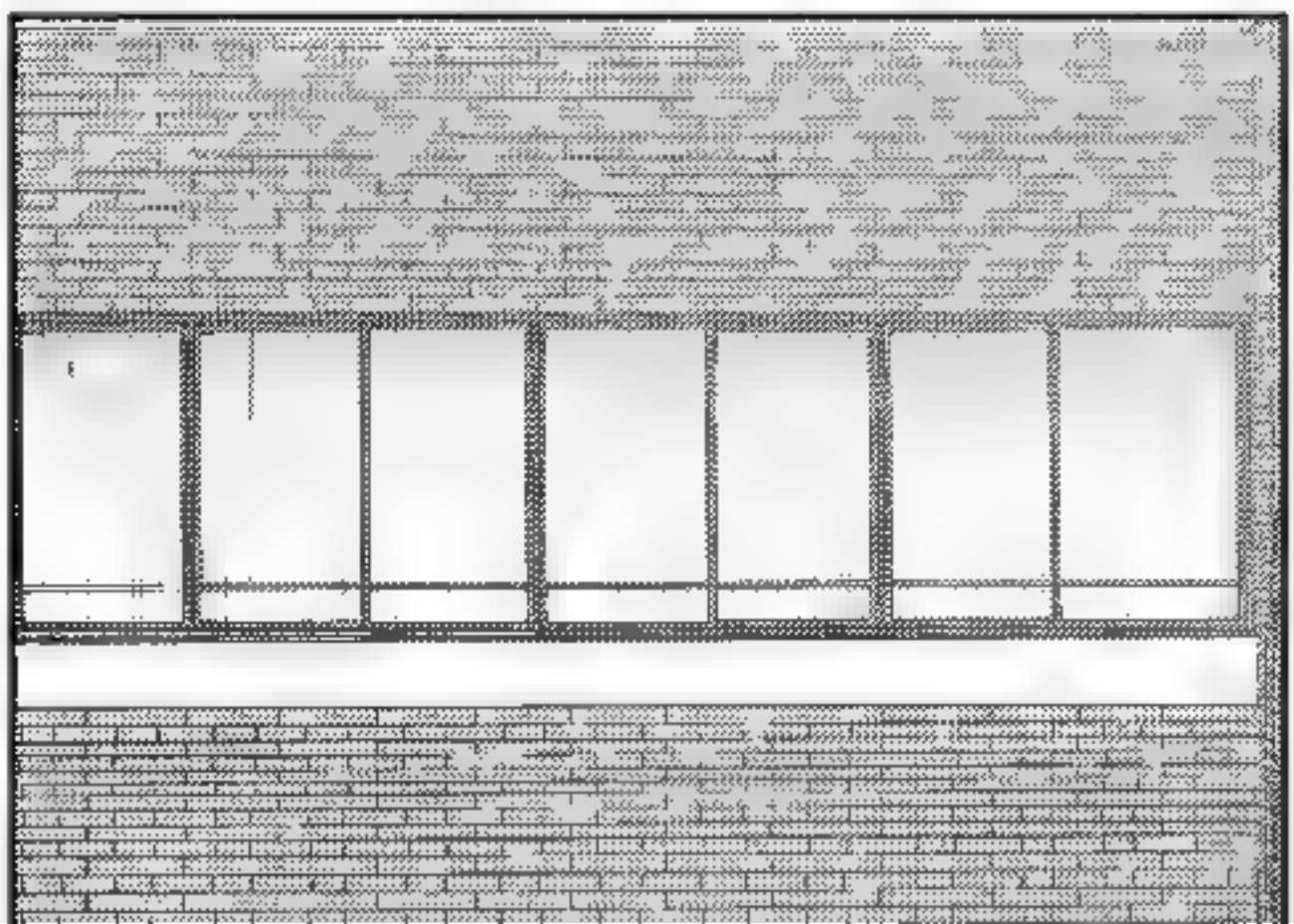
DID SOMETHING... SPECIAL HAPPEN BETWEEN THEM AT THAT TIME?

APPARENTLY, THEY WERE STUDYING TOGETHER.

AT THE END OF THE MONTH, I'M GOING TO TAKE T-UNIVERSITY'S MOCK EXAM TOGETHER WITH HOSHINA-SAN...

NO, THERE'S NO WAY...
NOT THOSE TWO... RIGHT?
RINTA-ROOO!
WHA ...?!
YOU WERE SPACING OUT THIS WHOLE TIME. SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND?
N-NO, NOTHING...
ALSO, CHECK THIS OUT!
ズイ
FWIP
...
!
29
First Term Final Exams
30





THANKS FOR INVITING US TODAY, YUZUHARA-SAN!

OH, DON'T SWEAT IT! THERE'S NO BETTER MOTIVATION THAN HAVING A REWARD TO LOOK FORWARD TO, RIGHT?

NOT TO MENTION THAT WE'RE ALL GONNA BE BUSY WITH OUR OWN STUFF THIS SUMMER BREAK, RIGHT?

THAT'S TRUE!

WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO MEET UP AS OFTEN ANYMORE.

SINCE WE'RE ALL HERE NOW...

ALL RIGHT!

MINA

LET'S HAVE SOME FUN!

I DON'T SEE ANY!

どうぶつえん
MA ZOO

WAIT, LOOK!

MAA-AAN...

THEY MIGHT'VE MOVED DEEPER INSIDE?

THERE'S ONE!

You okay?

So hot...

THEY'RE RUNNING AROUND LIKE LITTLE KIDS...

YEAH, YEAH, WE'RE COMING.

PIPE IT DOWN...

HURRY UP, YOU GUYS! WE'VE GOT RED PANDAS OVER HERE!

Chapter 136: A Day at the Zoo

THEY'RE SO ADORABLE!

HE'S GOT A POINT.

HUH ...?

NATSUSAWA? WHY ARE YOU STANDING ALL THE WAY OVER THERE? CAN YOU EVEN SEE THEM?

PAT ぽす

PAT ぽす

...!

I WISH IT'D LOOK THIS WAY FOR JUST A SECOND...

EVERYBODY KNOWS YOU LOVE ANIMALS, DUDE!

DRAG

DRAG

DRAG

Have fun, honey.

One, two!

One, two!

GEEZ! DON'T BE SHY NOW, MY PRECIOUS LITTLE SAKU!

I... I'M FINE OVER HERE, YUP.

LOOK AT THOSE ROUND AND ADORABLE EYES!

LOOK AT IT!

YANK

...

TRUE! I CAN ALMOST SEE A SMILE THERE!

OH! YOUR FACE LOOKS LESS TENSE THAN BEFORE!

SHUT UP, YOU TWO.

I HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE ZOO IN AGES, SO I WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO TODAY!

HE WAS THE ONE WHO SUGGESTED GOING TO A ZOO, AFTER ALL.

Natsusawa

How about the zoo?

Shohei

Roger!

I'd love to go!

NATSU-SAWA-KUN SEEMS HAPPY, NO?

YUP.

I WANNA CHECK OUT THE CHIMPANZEES NEXT!

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!

WHY NOT JUST DECIDE WITH A ROUND OF ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS?

WHERE ARE WE GOING NEXT?

Check out the chimpanzees? Or the birds?

WE'RE ALL GOING TO THE PETTING ZOO AT 11:30, SO DON'T FORGET THAT GUYS!

OKA-AAY!

This guy...

Oh dear...

WHAP

AREN'T WE GOING TO CHECK OUT ALL OF THEM ANYWAY—

HUMBLE

SCIS-SORS!

THEN LET'S GET THIS BATTLE STARTED!

ROCK, PAPER...

They're not around, huh?

Nope

I won for nothing!

Maybe they're taking a nap right now?

Probably

Information

To ensure the chimpanzees don't build up excessive stress from the attention, there are times where you might not be able to see them as they could be resting inside their sleep rooms.

Wow! Check that out!

Ah, how refreshing...

Doing a balance competition

You're a pair of tall bastards!

Petting Zoo
ふれあい広場

HEY, RINTARO-KUN!

Changed my mind!

I thought you were gonna pet the guinea pigs next?

Oh, dang! They got snakes, too!

LOOK!

ISN'T IT JUST THE CUTEST LITTLE THING?

IT SURE IS, YUP.

BUS

Joke's on you, I'm used to this by now.

AND THE COUPLE EVEN GETS TO SIT TOGETHER! ♡

Oh!

THERE'S A FEW OPEN SEATS IN THE BACK! LUCKY US!

GOOD THING WE MADE IT IN TIME, HUH?

IT'S PACKED, YO!

GO AHEAD.

AH...

...THANKS.

I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO SAY "I LOVE YOU"

SEEING HER SMILE LIKE THAT.

CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE CAFÉ WE'RE HEADING TO HAS GOT ON THE MENU, RIGHT?

YUP!

YOU KNOW, ALL THAT WALKING HAS ME STARVED!

NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY OVER THERE...

...

BUT NATSUSAWA IS NOT THE EXCEPTION HERE SHE'S WARMED UP TO THE REST OF US, TOO.

IT'S CLEAR AS DAY THAT THEY'VE GOTTEN MUCH CLOSER COMPARED TO WHEN THEY FIRST MET..

BUT... WHY..?! I DON'T GET IT...!

HOW COME SHE COULDN'T ASK KAORUKO-SAN WHILE ACTIVELY GOING OUT OF HER WAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NATSUSAWA?!

NO, THERE'S NO WAY..

NOT THOSE TWO. RIGHT?

YEAH, NEVER MIND.

WHAT AM I EVEN THINKING...?

THAT'S JUST NOT GONNA BE HAPPENING.

KNOWING THEM, ESPECIALLY AFTER EVERYTHING THAT WENT DOWN BETWEEN THEM...

駅

HUH?

YOU WERE PRACTICALLY GLUED TO YOUR PHONE.

HEY, WAGURI-SAN? WHAT WERE YOU DOING EARLIER?

STOP EXAG-GER-ATING.

AND WHEN I LOOKED AROUND, I SAW WAGURI-SAN GLARING AT HER PHONE LIKE SHE WAS GONNA KILL A MAN!

YUP! BUT I WOKE UP FOR JUST A SHORT MOMENT!

THE REST OF US WERE ASLEEP DURING THE RIDE, WEREN'T WE?

EARLIER WHEN WE WERE ON THE TRAIN!

WHEN... DO YOU MEAN?

KAORUKO WOULD NEVER MAKE A FACE LIKE THAT.

YOU WERE STUDY-ING?!

ACTUALLY, I WAS JUST STUDYING.

I'VE GOT THIS APP THAT LETS ME REVISE ENGLISH VOCA-BULARY.

You deserved to get scolded for that.

SNIFFLE

AH, THAT'S WHAT YOU MEANT?

...I FIGURED IT WOULDN'T BOTHER ANYBODY IF I WENT THROUGH MY VOCABULARY A LITTLE. EVERYONE ELSE WAS ASLEEP, AFTER ALL.

TO BE FAIR, I DID CONSIDER WATCHING A VIDEO OR TWO TO RELAX, BUT... I COULDN'T FULLY SHUT OFF, SO...

THAT'S INCREDIBLE! I'D JUST BE PLAYING A GAME OR SOMETHING.

ME?

Using an app to study, I mean.

HONESTLY, I'D EXPECT HOSHINA-SAN TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

...

USAMI! READ THE ROOM!

RIGHT! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW TECHNOLOGY WORKS, AFTER ALL!

TO BE HONEST, I WOULD END UP WASTING FAR TOO MUCH TIME TRYING TO FIGURE OUT ITS WORKINGS. I'D HAVE MY PRIORITIES BACKWARDS, NO?

THANKS, NATSU-SAWA-KUN.

YOU'RE LIKE OUR VERY OWN GPS. HAHA.

WE JUST WALKED THROUGH ONE ARCH GATE, SO...

WE SHOULD SOON BE THERE.

EXCU-UUSE ME?!

Ha ha ha!

I CAN TOTALLY SEE THAT HAPPENING!

OF COURSE. THE LAST TIME WE LEFT IT TO YOU, WE GOT DRAGGED ALL OVER THE PLACE AND TO THE EXACT OPPOSITE DIRECTION WE WERE GOING FOR.

WHEN IT'S JUST US GUYS HANGING OUT, HE'S ALWAYS THE ONE TAKING THE INITIATIVE, TOO.

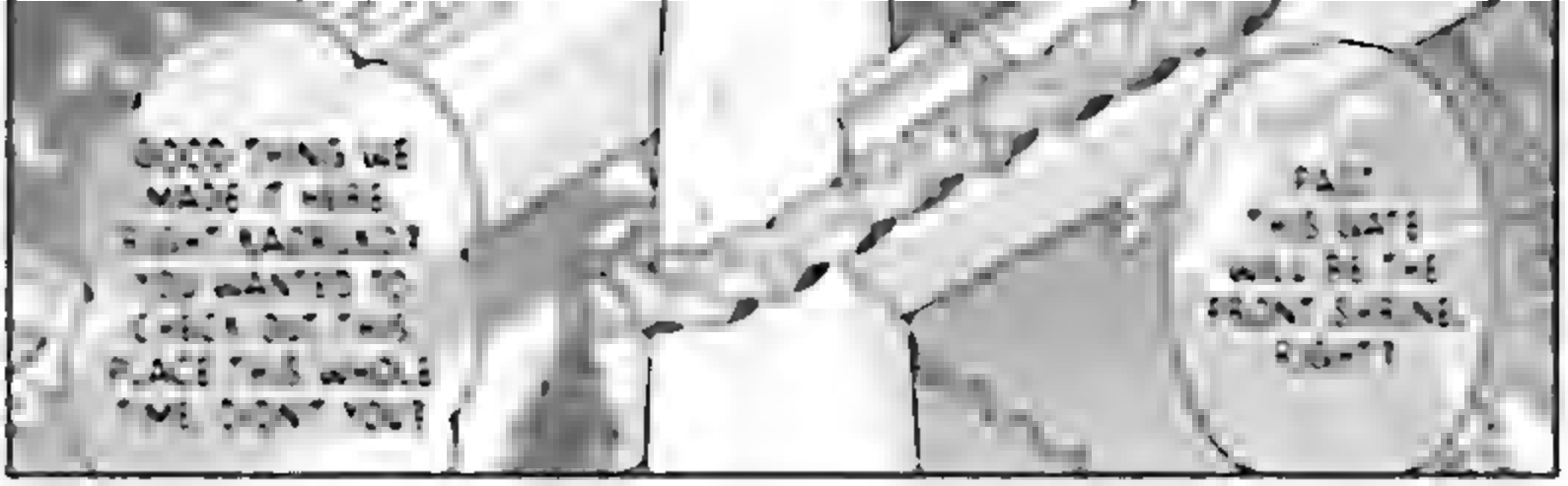
VERY MUCH SO, THANK YOU.

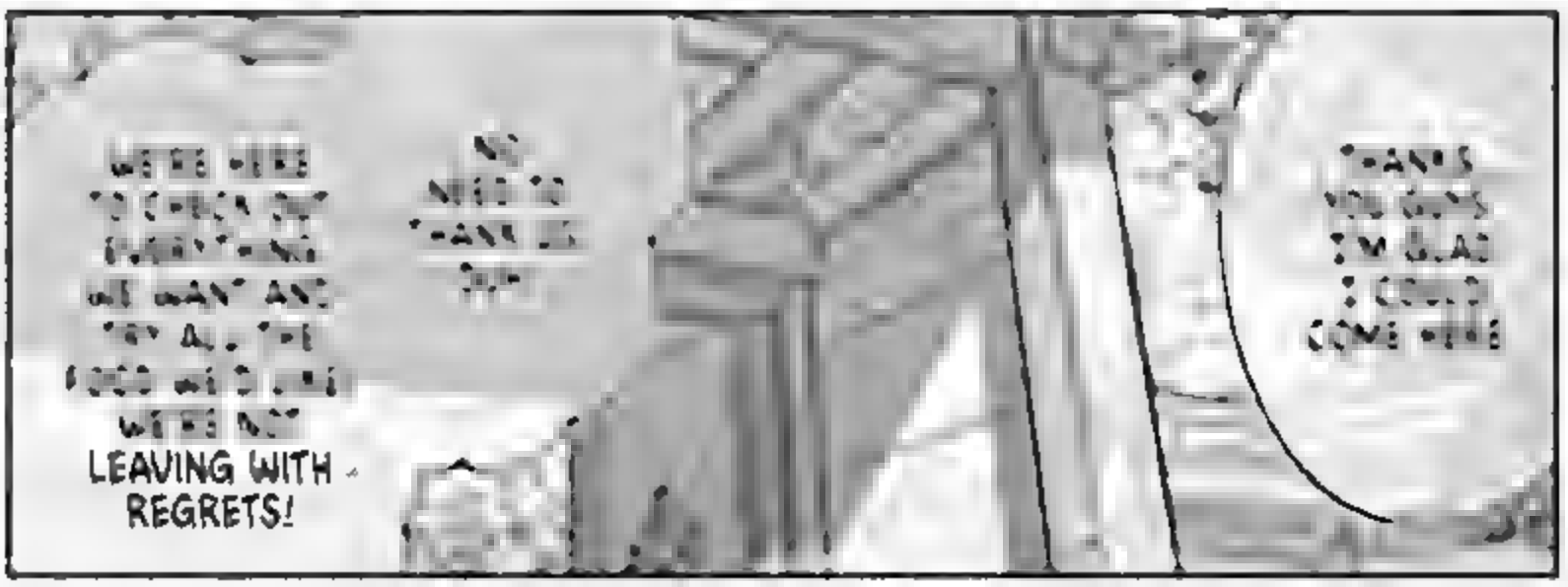
OH YEAH, YOU WERE A BIT UNDER THE WEATHER THIS MORNING. ARE YOU FEELING BETTER NOW?

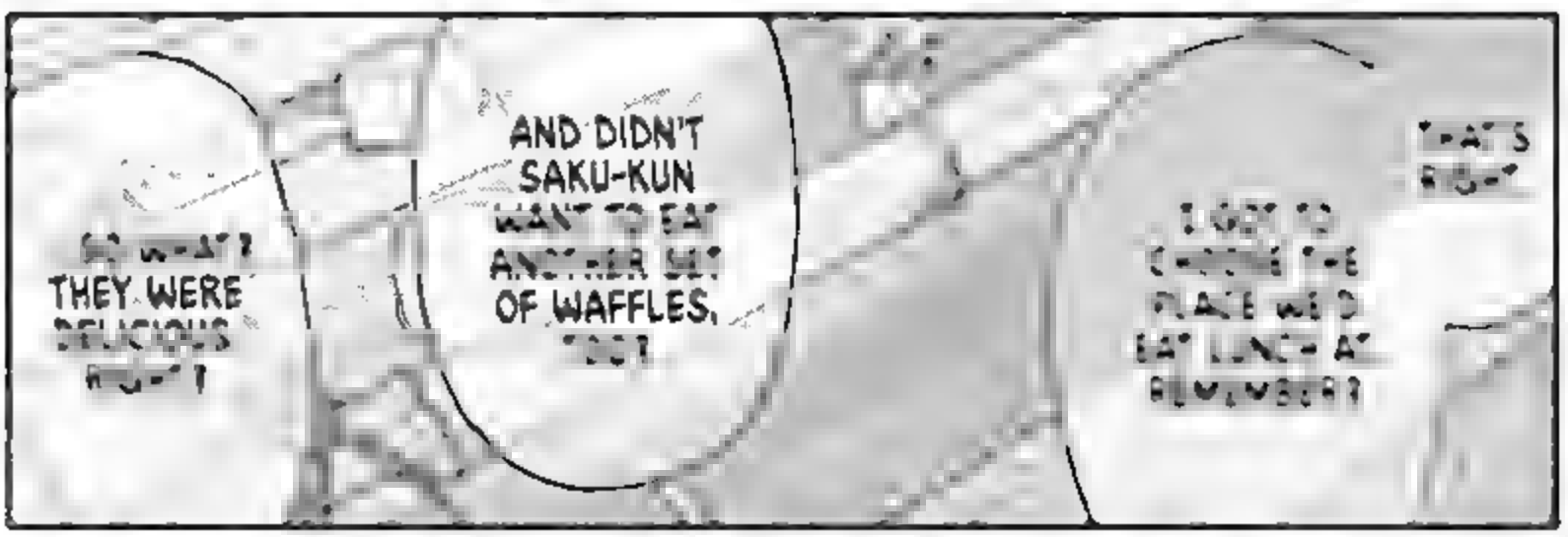
I'M GLAD WE'VE GOT SO MANY TREES DOWN THIS STREET. THE SHADE MAKES THE HEAT MUCH MORE BEARABLE.

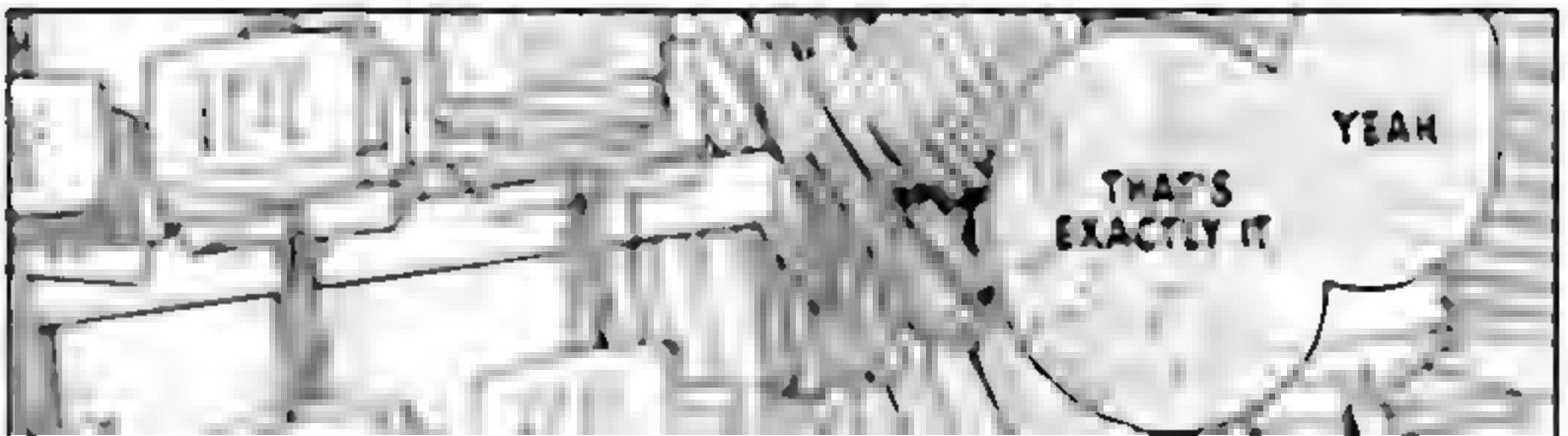
KRSH

THE AIR DEFINITELY FEELS DIFFERENT HERE...
impressive, right?
OH, THERE IT IS!




LEAVING WITH REGRETS!


AND DIDN'T SAKU-KUN WANT TO EAT ANOTHER SET OF WAFFLES, TOO?
THAT'S RIGHT


YEAH
THAT'S EXACTLY IT

...BUT I WANTED TO PRAY FOR SUCCESS IN MY ENTRANCE EXAMS.

I KNOW IT'S STILL WAYS OFF FOR NOW...

THEY'LL BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF US IN A FLASH, AFTER ALL.

Ha ha ha...

YOU CAN NEVER START TOO EARLY, RIGHT?

THOUGH I DO HAVE TO KEEP UP WITH MY STUDIES, TOO...

AGREED!

I SHOULD GET A PRAYER IN, TOO!

Two bows, two claps, one bow...

CLAP

CLAP

...AND NO MATTER HOW PAINFUL OR EXHAUSTING IT MAY BE...

...YOU MAY CHOOSE...

WHATEVER PATH...

YOU'LL SUCCEED AT IT. THAT'S THE KIND OF PERSON YOU ARE, AFTER ALL.

I DON'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT THAT.

NOT TO MENTION THAT WE'RE ALL GONNA BE BUSY WITH OUR OWN STUFF THIS SUMMER BREAK, RIGHT?

LET EVERYONE PASS THEIR EXAMS.

CLAP

CLAP

PLEASE...

...MAY EVERYONE'S EFFORTS PAY OFF FOR THEM.

AND...

ALL RIGHT!

AND TO FINISH OFF THE DAY, THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE FOR US!

Big Pack

honey, we're harrowed!

IT'S ALREADY BEEN A YEAR, HUH?!

Chapter 137: Back at That Beach

HUH?

I THINK IT WAS SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE, RIGHT?

...YOU BECAME FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE.

THIS IS WHERE...

IT'S RIGHT NOW...

...THAT I WANT TO BECOME FRIENDS WITH ALL OF YOU.

I THOUGHT OF YOU AS A FRIEND ALREADY!

...THAT'S TRUE.

EVEN GOT MY EYES ALL TEARY WHEN THEY TOLD ME!

OH YEAH, I HEARD ABOUT THAT!

...YUP.

AND STRAIGHT AFTER, YOU CONFESSED TO KAORUKO, RIGHT?

YOU COULDN'T HAVE HAD A WORSE TIMING, ACTUALLY.

GAAAH, MY BAD!

WAIT, IT'S MY FAULT NOW?! HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON?!

WELL, MOSTLY SHOHEI.

ONLY FOR US TO INTERRUPT THEM AT THE MOST CRUCIAL MOMENT, HAHA.

COMING TO THE SAME BEACH AND CHATTING ABOUT ALL OF THAT HAP-PENING...

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...

THAT'S JUST AWE-SOME!

IT MAKES YOU REALIZE HOW MANY MEMORIES YOU'VE MADE SINCE THEN, RIGHT?

...YOU'RE RIGHT.

AND THIS YEAR, YOU'RE OUR EXCLUSIVE GUEST! AREN'T YOU HAPPY?

OH, LUCKY ME!

THANKS FOR LETTING ME TAG ALONG DESPITE BEING THE NEWEST RECRUIT!

...

...?

...!

THEN LET'S GET EVERYTHING READY AND HAVE SOME FUN UNTIL IT'S TIME!

I THINK IT'LL TAKE A BIT LONGER UNTIL THE SUN'S GONNA START SETTING.

MAYBE I'M JUST... IMAGINING THINGS?

I must be.

WHERE SHOULD WE PUT OUR STUFF?

I GUESS WE CAN JUST PUT IT ALL TOGETHER LIKE LAST YEAR?

Let me drink the rest of this one here.

FOR THE FIREWORKS... WE JUST NEED AN EMPTY WATER BOTTLE WE CAN THROW AWAY LATER, RIGHT?

I THINK IT WAS... AROUND HERE, RIGHT?

...

THE FUN...

...WILL NEVER END!

I LIKE YOU

IT'S BEEN A WHOLE YEAR ALREADY, HUH?

I GUESS YOU WERE THINKING THE SAME THING?

Hee hee!

I THOUGHT YOU WERE READING MY MIND, GEEZ...

WUEH?!

YEAH, THAT'S TRUE...

THAT TIME WHEN IT WAS JUST THE TWO OF US... ENJOYING THE SPARKLERS.

WE NEVER REALLY TALKED ABOUT IT, RIGHT?

I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED YOU TO SAY THAT TO ME...

AND I WAS SO EMBARRASSED, I THOUGHT MY HEAD WAS GOING TO EXPLODE, BUT...

OUR FEELINGS HAD ALREADY BEEN MUTUAL BACK THEN, HUH?

I had no idea you felt that way, to be honest

Y-YUP...

Me neither.

EVEN SO...

WHEN YOU CONFESSED TO ME...

...I WAS REALLY OVER THE MOON.

...!

THAT WAS PROBABLY A FIRST FOR ME.

I COULD HEAR MY OWN HEART BEATING, EVEN.

HEY, RINTARO-KUN?

!

BETTER DO THAT QUICKLY, THEN...

THANK YOU!

YOU GUYS! JUST LEAVE YOUR STUFF HERE!

UM... LIKE WHAT...?

DO YOU THINK I COULD ASK YOU ABOUT A THING OR TWO?

WHEN WE NEXT MEET UP...

[illegible]

FALL IN LOVE WITH ME?

FOR EXAMPLE?

...HUH?

I MEAN... I GUESS SHE'D BE CURIOUS... ABOUT THAT?

TAT TAT たた!

JUST KID-DING!

hee hee!

ALL RIGHT, ALL DONE!

LET'S HAVE SOME FUN, FOLKS!

TOSS

MY BAD, GUYS.

SORRY FOR NOT HELPING OUT EARLIER!

NO WORRIES! DIDN'T TAKE LONG AT ALL.

THE SEA! THE BLUE GOODNESS!

STOP PULLING!

WO-HOOO!

Natsu sawa's angry.

Wow he did it

Ah

YOU THINK THEY'RE GONNA SPLASH WATER AT EACH OTHER LIKE LAST YEAR?

GOOD CHANCE.

YEA-AAH!

WE BETTER GO AFTER THEM!

LET ME GO! I'M STILL WEAR-ING MY SHOES! HEY!

...

AYE, AYE!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, YOU GUYS? GET OVER HERE!

!

SPLASH

I JUST... FELT LIKE GIVING IT A SHOT.

AH, SORRY...

TO RETURN THE FAVOR FOR LAST YEAR, YOU KNOW?

I THOUGHT OF YOU AS A FRIEND ALREADY!

SO GET OVER HERE

I COULD NEVER FORGET WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY.

OF COURSE.

YOU... REMEM-BERED?

RIGHT, I DID DO THAT TO YOU.

...FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE, I'M SURE.

I WILL REMEM-BER IT...

...

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...

WHEN WE WENT TO THE SHRINE EARLIER TODAY, YOU WERE PRAYING REALLY INTENSELY, NO?

YOU HAD YOUR EYES CLOSED FOR THE LONGEST OUT OF ALL OF US.

I DO FEEL BAD FOR HAVING THE REST OF YOU WAIT, BUT...

THESE EXAMS ARE JUST THAT IMPORTANT, AFTER ALL.

EVEN I KNOW HOW HARD YOU'RE WORKING.

SURELY, THAT GOD MUST BE WATCHING YOU PROPERLY, RIGHT?

YOU'LL BE FINE, I'M SURE.

...

AND... WHAT ABOUT YOU?

HUH?

OH, YOU MEAN MY CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY?

...

HUH?

WH-WHICH UNIVERSITY...

DO YOU PLAN ON ATTENDING AFTER GRADUATING?

WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU MADE UP WITH HIDAKA-KUN.

I GUESS I JUST ASSUMED THAT YOU'D BE GOING THERE NOW. I'M SORRY

NO, IT'S FINE...

YOU SERIOUSLY ARE TOO KIND FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.

...!

YOU'RE... WORRIED ABOUT ME, RIGHT?

BUT, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT TIME FOR ALL OF US, SO YOU SHOULD JUST FOCUS ON YOURSELF.

...

?

WELL, THAT MIGHT BE A PART OF IT.

WORRY...

...WE'D ACTUALLY BE GOING TO THE SAME UNIVERSITY, SO...

SPLISH

BUT I JUST KIND OF ASSUMED...

...DIS-APPOINTED.

I GUESS...

I WAS A BIT...

...MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE, AFTER ALL.

HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE...

...WHY?

AND SO... I WON'T TELL HER.

...TO SAY "I LOVE YOU."

I CAN'T BRING MYSELF...

...SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

WHY DO YOU...

SERIOUSLY?

HA HA HA...

Chapter 138: Pounding Feelings

WELL...

I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THAT.

...

...

There's something stuck to my ankle!

Yuck!

THIS ISN'T RIGHT.
THIS IS...

HE'S SMILING, AND YET...

IT'S DIFFERENT FROM... USUAL...

ALSO...

I'M SURE YOU'LL DO JUST FINE WITHOUT ME.

I MEAN, I GET WHY YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT UNIVERSITY LIFE.

F-FINE...? BUT...

N-NATSU-SAWA-KUN...

...?!

YOU'RE GOING TO FIND NEW PEOPLE... AND A NEW PLACE WHERE YOU BELONG.

BUT EVEN IF WE'RE NOT AROUND ANYMORE...

AFTER ALL...

YOU'RE A GREAT PERSON, HOSHINA-SAN.

...

!!

THE CUFFS OF YOUR JEANS ARE ALL WET!

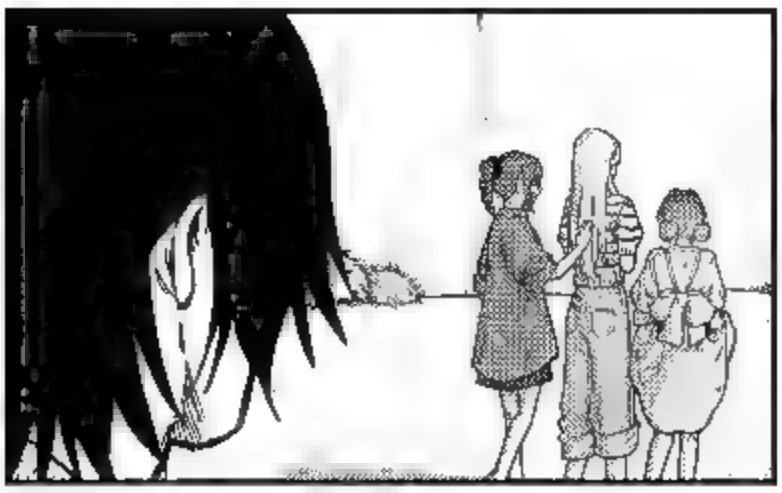
HEY, SUBARU!

THAT WAS ONE HELL OF A WAVE JUST NOW, RIGHT!

Must have happened 'cause of that.

M-MADOKA ...?

OH, YOU'RE RIGHT...



MAYBE WE SHOULD WASH THEM OFF A BIT? WOULDN'T WANT THEM TO GET DAMAGED, RIGHT?

KAO-RUKO...?

GREAT POINT! LET'S GO!

WAS I ABLE...

...TO SMILE NORMALLY...?

I MUST HAVE... SURPRISED HER, RIGHT?

THE GIRLS GOT IT ROUGH, HUH?

WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING...?

!

IT WOULDN'T HURT TO BE A BIT MORE MINDFUL OF THAT STUFF, NO?

WE'RE AT THE BEACH, SO WE'RE BOUND TO GET WET, DUH!

SPLASH

SPLASH

!

HEY, NATSU-SAWA.

HOW ABOUT WE HAVE SOME FUN UNTIL THE GIRLS GET BACK?

NOW THAT IT'S JUST US...

You're creeping me out here!

WHY ARE YOU GUYS SO FIRED UP ALL OF A SUDDEN?

WUH... *HUH?!*

BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE COULD LAST FOOL AROUND TOGETHER, RIGHT?

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!

WHAT'S FIRST? GOING FOR A SWIM IMMEDIATELY?

I FEEL LIKE LETTING LOOSE RIGHT NOW.

SOUNDS GOOD.

THEN LET'S NOT WASTE A SECOND, GUYS!

EVEN SAKUZ!

WHOAZ! HEY, NO FAIR!

YOU'RE SCARY, DUDE.

SO THAT'S HOW YOU'RE GONNA PLAY THE GAMEZ

FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT!

I CAN DO THIS MYSELF, MADOKA.

NO WORRIES, NO WORRIES!

GOTTA MAKE SURE THERE'S NO SAND IN THERE, AND YOU CAN'T REALLY SEE FROM UP THERE, RIGHT?

TH-THANKS...

MHM, A GOOD HONEST GIRL YOU ARE!

...

NOW THEN...

HOW DO I GO ABOUT BRINGING UP WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

THE REST OF US...

...COULD ACTUALLY LISTEN IN ON THEIR CONVER-SATION.

BUT... NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT...

I HAD MY SUSPICIONS WHEN I HEARD THEY MET UP TO STUDY TOGETHER, BUT...

I WAS RIGHT AFTER ALL?! RIGHT ON THE MONEY?!

YOU BET IT IS!

YOU MET UP WITH NATSU-SAWA-KUN?! JUST THE TWO OF YOU?!

IS THAT SUCH A SHOCK TO YOU?

NATSU-SAWA-KUN... MUST BE FEELING THAT WAY TOWARD HER, RIGHT?!

...BECAUSE HE THINKS SHE JUST SEES HIM AS A FRIEND?

THAT SAID, IS HE HIDING HIS FEELINGS FOR SUBARU...

...AND OPTED TO USE AN AD-HOC EXCUSE TO GET THEM AWAY FROM EACH OTHER, BUT THE WAY I SEE IT...

I'll handle this.

TO BE HONEST, I HAD A BAD FEELING ABOUT THE VIBE BETWEEN THEM...

This girl, she's totally oblivious to it all...

HEY, SUBARU?

...

?

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT NATSUSAWA-KUN?

KA...

WHAT ...?

What kind of straight ball down the line was that, huh?!

Hello?!

KAORU-KOOO?!

SO THEN...

WHEN YOU TOLD HIM THAT YOU FEEL AT EASE WHEN HE'S WITH YOU...

IS THAT BECAUSE HE'S AN IMPORTANT FRIEND TO YOU?

I MEAN...

HE'S AN IMPORTANT FRIEND...?

UM...

...!

AND WHAT ABOUT YORITA-KUN?

OR RINTARO-KUN?

HUH ...?

SO YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY TOWARD USAMI-KUN?

Y- YES...?

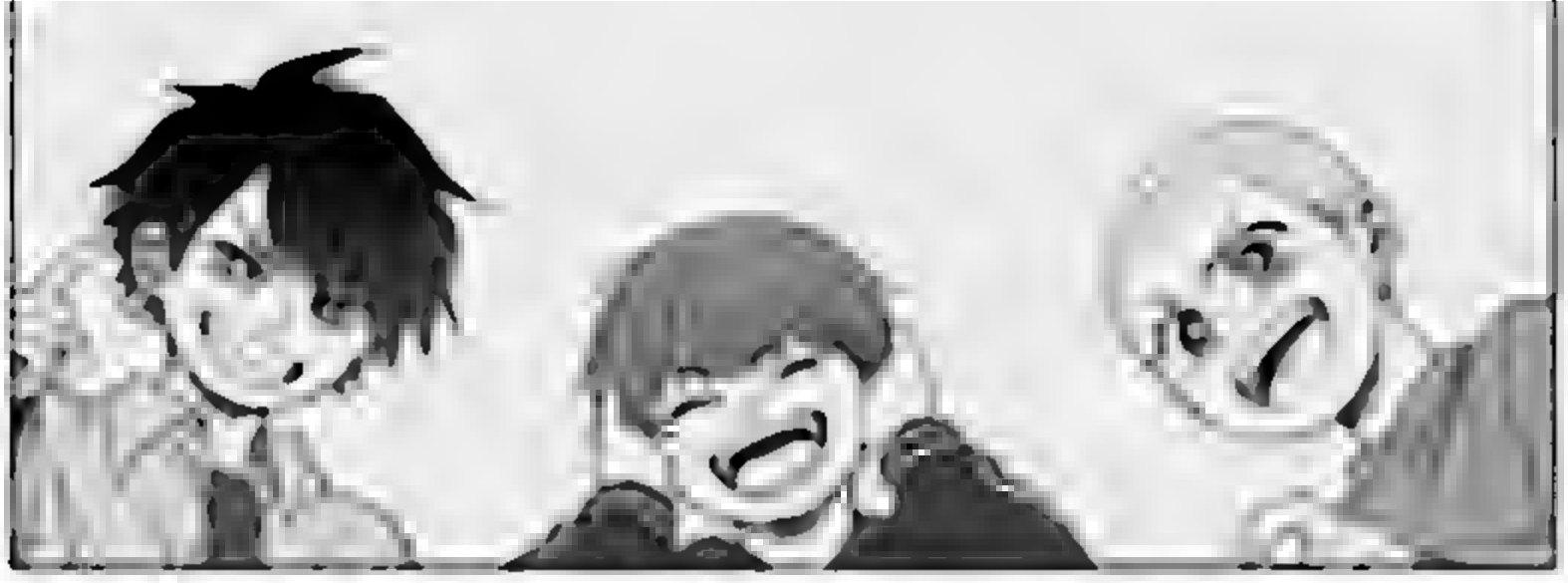
LISTEN TO ME.

WHAT POINT... ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE?

...?

I'M CONFUSED...

KAO-RUKO...?



OR SHE
WON'T EVER
GET IT

ÇİLİ
İLAN

PLEASE LISTEN CAREFULLY... TO WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY.

YO, WELCOME BACK!

WE'RE DONE, YOU GUYS!

THIS ONLY EVER ENDS WITH US SOAKED TO THE BONE!

SAME RESULT AS LAST YEAR, HUH?

OH, LOOK!

...!

SORRY IT TOOK SO...

HOLY SMOKES, DID YOU GUYS HOLD A SWIM MEET OR SOME-THING?!

...!

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GUYS ARE HAVING FUN, Y'KNOW!

...I THINK SO.

EVERY-THING CLEAN WITH YOUR JEANS?

YEAH?

GLAD TO HEAR IT.

I GOT OFF EASIER THAN LAST YEAR, AT LEAST.

THE SUN'S STARTING TO SET, RIGHT? THAT MEANS...

YOOO, GUUUYS!

IT'S TIME FOR THIS BAD BOY!
YOU GUESSED IT!

HOSPEDNA

SUBARU...!

PLEASE LISTEN CAREFULLY... TO WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY.

Chapter 139: More Than Just A Friend

HUH...?

...

YOU KNOW...

WHEN YOU TOLD NATSUSAWA-KUN...

I WAS ACTUAL-LY...

...PRETTY SHOCKED.

...THAT BEING WITH HIM...

MAKES YOU FEEL AT EASE...

BUT THAT IS HOW YOU GENUINELY FEEL, RIGHT?

YOU ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE DEALING WITH MEN, AND YET...

NOT ONLY DID YOU MANAGE TO BE FRIENDS WITH HIM...

...?

...AND JUST HOW STRONGLY IT INFLUENCES YOU TO THIS DAY.

I KNOW BETTER THAN ANY-ONE...

HOW MUCH YOU SUFFERED IN THE PAST...

COULD MAKE THINGS EVEN MORE COMPLICATED FOR YOU.

...WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY...

AND I UNDER-STAND THAT...

...

I HAVE TO TELL YOU REGARD-LESS.

BUT...

SUBARU...

I WANT YOU TO PROPERLY THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT MEANS TO YOU.

WHEN YOU SAY THAT BEING WITH NATSUSAWA-KUN MAKES YOU FEEL AT EASE...

!

DO YOU FEEL THAT WAY BECAUSE HE'S YOUR FRIEND...

OR IS IT BE-CAUSE...

HUH ...?

...YOU SEE HIM AS MORE THAN JUST THAT?

K-KAORUKO, WHAT ARE YOU—

HUH ...?!

WHA... MORE THAN THAT...?

O-
OKAY...

...

...!

THAT LOOK IN HER EYES...

I'LL... THINK ABOUT IT.

...SHE SHOWED ME AN EXPRESSION LIKE THAT?

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME...

...IS SOMETHING I PROBABLY SHOULD TRY TO FIGURE OUT.

AND THAT MEANS WHAT SHE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME...

...IT'S ALL I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT.

STILL. EVER SINCE SHE ASKED ME THAT...

THEY'RE ALL SPECIAL TO ME.

THEY'RE ALL MY FRIENDS.

TSU-MUGI-KUN...

USAMI-KUN, AND YORITA-KUN...

...FALLS UNDER THAT SAME CATEGORY.

AND NATSUSAWA-KUN...

YET...

AT THE SAME TIME...

THERE'S SOME-THING ELSE...

HE'S DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER THREE

SOME-WHERE IN MY HEART

I HAVE THIS FAINT FEELING THAT, TO ME...

WHAT IS THAT FEEL-ING?

BUT...

..

FEEL FOR EACH OTHER?

THE SORT OF AFFECTION THAT KAO-RUKO AND TSUMUGI-KUN...

COULD BE

...

...!

RUFFLE

...?

...

FWUMP

I MEAN, ALL THIS TIME...

GRIP

...I ALWAYS FELT AS IF I WAS FROM A DIFFERENT PLANET, UNABLE TO FOLLOW.

...AMONGST EACH OTHER...

WHENEVER THE GIRLS WERE DISCUSSING LOVE AND ROMANCE...

...MADE ME FEEL HAPPY FOR THEM, TOO. THAT'S WHEN THEY WERE THE CUTEST, AFTER ALL.

SEEING THEM ALL EXCITED AS THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT IT...

STILL, IT DIDN'T REALLY MATTER.

..THAN THE PERSONI-FICATION OF FEAR AND HATRED.

NOTHING MORE

TO ME, HOW-EVER.

MEN WERE REALLY JUST

NOR WOULD I HAVE EVER IMAGINED I'D BE HAVING THOUGHTS AND TROUBLES LIKE I DO RIGHT NOW.

...I ALWAYS ASSUMED I'D NEVER HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT.

...SORT OF THING...

SO WHEN IT COMES TO THIS...

...FALL IN LOVE WITH A MAN.

THAT I WOULD...

...WOULD LOVE ME BACK...

AND THAT THEY...

LIKE A STORY STRAIGHT OUT OF A FAIRYTALE, FAR REMOVED FROM MY REALITY.

IT ALL SOUND-ED...

I DON'T UNDER-STAND...

NOW CAN I TELL THE DIFFER-ENCE?

AND LIKING SOMEONE ROMANTI-CALLY...

LIKING SOMEONE AS A FRIEND...

YUZUHARA

YOU THINK THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO?!

MADOKAAA!

THOUGH, I GUESS I WAS THE ONE WHO GOT CURIOUS WHY YOU'D ASK SUBARU SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

HMMM...

RIP

W-WELL, THAT'S NOT THE RESPONSE I EXPECTED...

Oh!

TOTALLY! I FINISHED MY BATH ALREADY, AFTER ALL.

JUST GONNA STUDY SOME MORE BEFORE HEADING TO BED.

IS NOW EVEN A GOOD TIME FOR YOU?

ALSO, SORRY FOR CALLING YOU OUT OF THE BLUE, KAORUKO!

Don't worry

Especially with entrance exams coming up.

SOME LIGHT STUDYING HAS BEEN MY HABIT BEFORE SLEEPING FOR A WHILE NOW.

THAT... THAT'S VERY MUCH LIKE YOU, I GUESS...

WHAT, DID YOU JUST SAY *STUDY*?!

YOU SHOULD'VE TOLD ME!

NOW, NOW, IT'S FINE.

CONSIDERING WE SHOULD BE FOCUSING ON OUR STUDIES RIGHT BEFORE SUMMER BREAK...

MAYBE I SHOULD'VE CHOSEN A BETTER TIMING?

CLOSE TO CERTAIN, I BET.

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES SUBARU'S GONNA SPEND THE NIGHT WIDE AWAKE IN BED?

はぁ！ SIGH!

...

...

...IT'D BE BETTER TO TELL HER SOONER THAN LATER.

...

I JUST THOUGHT...

BUT...

BEFORE, AT THE LIBRARY...

WHEN SUBARU TOLD US THAT SHE MET UP WITH NATSUSAWA-KUN TO STUDY...

...IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE YOU REALLY HAD MUCH OF AN OPINION TOWARD THAT, RIGHT?

...

WHAT MADE THIS TIME DIFFERENT COMPARED TO THEN?

EGH!

TEARY

MEETING WITH A BOY TO HANG OUT SHE'S COME SO FAR!

I NEED TO THANK NATSUSAWA-KUN AND THE OTHERS LATER!

...THEN THAT WOULD CHANGE THINGS, I THOUGHT.

Kaoruko Waguri

...HAPPENED TO HAVE FEELINGS FOR SUBARU...

KTK

IF NATSU-SAWA-KUN...

I WAS JUST... THANKFUL TO EVERYONE MORE THAN ANYTHING.

I COULD TELL THAT SHE REALLY TRUSTED HIM, AND IT MADE ME HAPPY TO SEE THAT.

AND JUST THE TWO OF THEM, NO LESS...

WHEN SHE FIRST TOLD US THAT THEY MET UP...

BUT...

LOOKING AT HIM...

...HE CLEARLY WASN'T CALM AT ALL.

...IS JUST MORE PROOF THAT SHE HAS ACCEPTED HIM.

SAYING THAT SHE FEELS AT EASE WITH HIM AROUND...

I WOULD'VE SIMPLY CELEBRATED THE WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIP THESE TWO NOW HAVE.

AND IF HE HAD ACCEPTED THAT COMPLIMENT WITHOUT ANY MAJOR REACTION...

THEY ARE SPECIAL TO HER REGARDLESS IF THEY'RE A BOY OR A GIRL.

ONCE SHE'S GROWN ATTACHED TO SOMEONE...

YEAH, THAT'S TRUE.

TO SUBARU, IT PROBABLY FEELS NO DIFFERENT FROM HOW SHE'S SPENDING TIME WITH US, BUT...

...

KAO-RUKO?

?

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO NATSUSAWA-KUN...

I DO FEEL LIKE...

...THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL SHE FEELS TOWARD HIM.

Though probably on a sub-conscious level.

SHE'S ALWAYS CHEERFUL. ALWAYS HAPPY.

NO MATTER HOW EXHAUSTED OR TIRED FROM WALKING SUBARU MAY BE...

WE'RE ON THE WAY HOME AFTER HANGING OUT WITH EVERYONE THE WHOLE DAY...

WHENEVER.

...THAT SHE HAD THE TIME OF HER LIFE.

YOU CAN TELL JUST FROM LOOKING AT HER...

THAT'S UNDOUBTEDLY THANKS TO RINTARO-KUN, NATSUSAWA-KUN, AND THE OTHERS.

AND THE REASON SHE CAN DO THAT NOW...

.. AND OPENED UP TO .. THIS NEW WORLD THAT IS LIKE A TREASURE TO HER...

WHILE SHE HAS MANAGED TO GAIN A NEW PERSPECTIVE...

BUT...

IF THINGS PROCEED LIKE THIS, WHILE SHE'S NOT IN THE CLEAR ABOUT HER OWN FEELINGS TOWARD NATSUSAWA-KUN...

SO...

IT'S MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO NATSUSAWA-KUN'S KIND-NESS...

...AND THE PAIN HE PROBABLY FEELS FROM LETTING THINGS STAY AS THEY ARE.

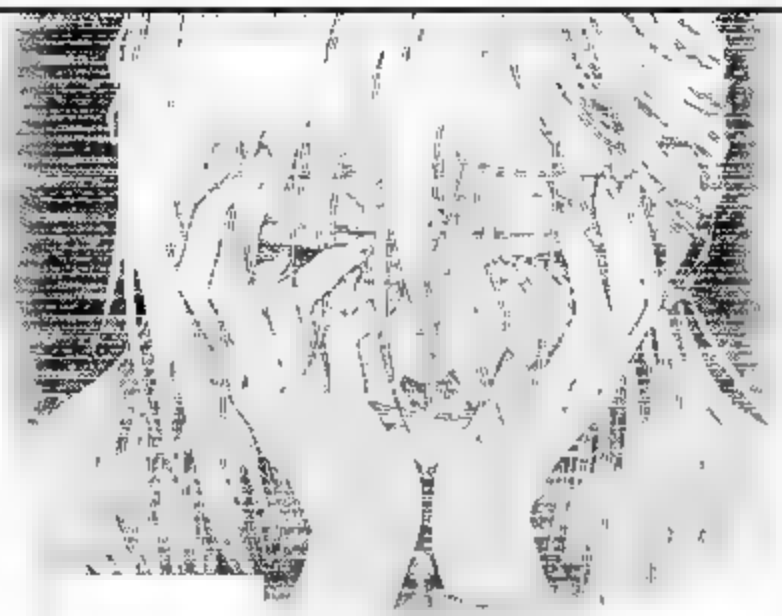
EVEN IF...

THAT IS SOMETHING SHE'S NOT EVEN AWARE OF.

...SHE MIGHT END UP HURTING HIM. SOMEONE SHE CLEARLY CARES ABOUT.

...SHE'LL SURELY COME TO HATE HERSELF FOR WHAT SHE'S DONE.

THAT SAID, ONCE SHE EVENTUALLY DOES REALIZE THE TRUTH...



...I NEED HER TO FIND IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

SO, NO MATTER WHAT HER ANSWER MAY BE...

OF COURSE, THIS ISN'T ANYBODY'S FAULT.

KAORUKO?

...!

...

AND...

I, TOO, HAVE TO...

FORGIVE ME FOR PUSHING THIS ONTO YOU OUT OF THE BLUE.

SUBARU...

EVERYTHING OKAY?

...AND KNOWING THAT YOU MIGHT END UP SUFFERING ALL BY YOURSELF AGAIN...

BEING FORCED TO SEE YOU PUT YOURSELF DOWN AGAIN AND AGAIN...

BUT...

WATCHING YOU CRY OUT LOUD BECAUSE YOU'RE IN PAIN...

IS CREATE BURDEN FOR YOU.

ALL I DO.

I'M NOT KIND.

...I REFUSE TO SIT BY IDLY. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU LIKE THAT EVER AGAIN.

...LOVE YOU SO HOPELESSLY MUCH, SUBARU.

BECAUSE I JUST...

Chapter 140: What Even Is Love?

ENROLL AT A MEDICAL SCHOOL, I SEE.

SO YOU WOULD LIKE TO...

Attending university

2. Please state your university of choice and your preferred department / faculty.

	First Choice	Second Choice
University	Chuumei University	Seifu University
Department	Medical School	Medical School
		Medical Sciences

THEN YOU WERE STILL UNDECIDED BEFORE, I TAKE IT?

I FINALLY MADE UP MY MIND.

THAT'S COR-RECT.

FOR-GIVE ME FOR THE QUESTION, BUT...

COULD YOUR MOTHER HAVE HAD ANY INFLUENCE ON THAT DECISION?

THE REASON YOU'D LIKE TO BECOME A DOCTOR...

WELL, HAHA...

I WAS, YES.

...

I'D LIKE TO BE AN OBSTETRICIAN-GYNECOLOGIST IN THE FUTURE.

I HAD ALREADY PLAYED WITH THE THOUGHT OF IT BEFORE MY MOTHER FELL SICK.

...NO.

THAT...

...IS A RELIEF, YES.

OH, AND...

MY MOTHER IS DOING JUST FINE RIGHT NOW.

YES! I'LL DO MY BEST!

EVEN DURING THE UP-COMING SUMMER BREAK.

I HOPE THAT YOU KEEP UP YOUR HARD WORK...

...

Staff Office

I HOPE THINGS WON'T BE AWKWARD...

DO YOU FEEL THAT WAY BECAUSE HE'S YOUR FRIEND...

OR IS IT BECAUSE...

YOU SEE HIM AS MORE THAN JUST THAT?

I WANT YOU TO PROPERLY THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT MEANS TO YOU.

WHEN YOU SAY THAT BEING WITH HASEGAWA-KUN MAKES YOU FEEL AT EASE.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HATSUSHIBA-KUN?

SUBARU...

SUBARU AND I HAVEN'T TALKED SINCE THAT DAY...

OH! MORNING, KAORUKO!

I WAS WONDERING WHERE YOU WENT, BUT...

3-A

WE JUST HAD HOSHINA-SAN TEACH US A BIT, SEE.

MAKES SENSE!

AND WHILE I WAS THERE, I TALKED WITH TOKI-SENSEI A BIT...ABOUT MY PLANS FOR THE FUTURE AND SUCH.

I SEE, YOU GOT CLASS DUTY TODAY!

Class Journal

I WENT TO GRAB THE CLASS JOURNAL FROM THE STAFF OFFICE.

NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY SO FAR...

I'm glad I could help.

Don't worry about it.

Sorry that I'm asking you for help like this. You must be busy with your own stuff...

...

MORN—

HUH?

PULL

MORNING, KAORUKO.

...COME WITH ME FOR A MOMENT.

!

COULD I HAVE SOME OF YOUR TIME DURING LUNCH BREAK?

AND...

I WANTED TO HAVE YOUR OPINION ON SOME THINGS.

!

I THOUGHT ABOUT... WHAT YOU TOLD ME AT THE BEACH.

OH... MUST BE ENGLISH, I BET.

APPARENTLY, SHE'S GONNA HAVE A FIERCE BATTLE WITH HER HOMEWORK THEN.

No can do, sorry!

ABOUT THAT...

ARE YOU GOING TO TELL MADOKA, TOO?

THANK YOU.

OKAY, NO PRO-BLEM!

ACTUALLY, MY HOME-WORK'S PART OF IT, SURE...

USUALLY, I'M THE PERSON WHO JUST GETS EXCITED OVER OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES...

AND I DOUBT I COULD EVEN GIVE HER ANY PROPER ANSWER NO MATTER WHAT SHE'D ASK ME.

A few minutes prior...

Huh?!

Could we talk...?

BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING, I DON'T THINK I'M THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THIS, NOPE!

IT DID SEEM LIKE TSUMUGI-KUN AND YORITA-KUN WERE AWARE OF NATSUSAWA-KUN'S FEELINGS, BUT...

I WONDER...

THAT REMINDS ME...

WHAT'S THEIR COURSE OF ACTION LOOKING LIKE?

YOU'RE A GENIUS!

CAN'T YOU JUST PRESS THEM BOTH AT THE SAME TIME AND TRY YOUR LUCK?

EITHER ONE IS FINE, NO? I DON'T DRINK EITHER OF THEM...

SAKUUU! HELP ME! I CAN'T DECIDE WHICH ONE TO BUY!

...

LOOKS LIKE IT...

SAME AS ALWAYS, ISN'T HE?

I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THAT.

STILL, SAKU OF ALL PEOPLE, HUH?

THINGS ONLY SEEMED WEIRD THAT ONE TIME AT THE BEACH, AFTER ALL.

NOT MUCH OF A SURPRISE, I GUESS. I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE HE WAS ACTING DIFFERENT THE OTHER DAY, EITHER.

I SURE DIDN'T EXPECT HIM...

...TO SHOW US AN EXPRESSION LIKE THAT.

I'M HAPPY SHE TRUSTS HIM ENOUGH TO SAY THAT, BUT...

THAT ONE WAS A LETHAL SHOT TO THE HEART, RIGHT? LIKE SHE TOOK FIVE STEPS AT ONCE.

LIKE THEM STARTING OUT ON BAD TERMS NEVER EVEN HAPPENED, YEAH.

HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE...

...MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE, AFTER ALL.

RIGHT...

AND WHAT HOSHINA-SAN SAID RIGHT BEFORE THAT... DEFINITELY CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE.

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

AND? ARE YOU GONNA ASK HIM?

...

ABOUT... HOSHINA-SAN, I MEAN.

...

UNTIL HE DECIDES IT'S FINE TO TELL US, I WON'T PRESSURE HIM INTO COMING CLEAN.

...NO.

AND DOESN'T WANT SOMETHING TO HAPPEN, LET ALONE CHANGE.

IF I HAD TO GUESS, HE HIMSELF IS FINE WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE...

AFTER ALL, HE'S BEEN HIDING IT FROM US AND EVERYONE ELSE.

THOUGH, I WONDER...

I AGREE WITH YOU THERE.

...

WHICH MEANS... I WON'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, EITHER.

ARE YOU AND WAGURI-SAN DATING?

HOW COME HE COULD SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME BACK THEN?

...

WHAT ABOUT USAMI?

IT SURE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'S GOT ANY CLUE AS TO WHAT'S GOING ON.

ERM... SO?

...ON A HOT DAY LIKE THIS?

LOOK! IT CHOSE THE MISO SOUP ONE FOR ME!

...THAT MUCH?

BROTHER... IT'S BEEN A WHOLE YEAR AND YOU ONLY NOW REALIZED HOW OBVIOUS YOU WERE AT THE TIME?

PLOP

OH, WOW.

YOUR MOTHER ONCE MADE THESE FOR ME A LONG TIME AGO.

They were really good.

YAAAY! RICE BALLS WRAPPED IN BACON!

Wohooo!

Then pick something from my box, too.

Are you sure?

Then you can have one of mine!

WE USED TO EAT TOGETHER PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY, AFTER ALL.

DOESN'T IT TAKE YOU BACK TO WHEN WE FIRST ENROLLED HERE?

YOU KNOW, SITTING NEXT TO EACH OTHER WHILE EATING LUNCH LIKE THIS...

SUBARU'S ACTING JUST LIKE SHE USUALLY DOES...?!

...

SO, KAO-RUKO...

...BUT MAYBE IT WASN'T THAT BIG OF A DEAL TO HER...?

I HONESTLY ASSUMED THAT WHAT I TOLD HER MUST HAVE THROWN HER OFF BY QUITE A LOT...

KOFF

WHY DID YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH TSUMUGI-KUN?

TO YOU, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND NATSUSAWA-KUN?

FWAP

...

WHAT AM I EVEN SUPPOSED TO SAY TO THAT?

ERM... WELL...

WHAT?

BECAUSE I...DON'T REALLY KNOW.

...SOMETHING THAT FELT FAR REMOVED FROM MY LIFE.

LOVE HAS ALWAYS BEEN...

AND I DON'T THINK THAT WILL EVER CHANGE.

THOSE FOUR ARE ALREADY SPECIAL.

THEY'RE MY PRECIOUS FRIENDS.

...

TO ME...

...IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER BOYS.

NATSU-SAWA-KUN'S PLACE IN MY HEART...

SOME-HOW...

BUT...

...I CAN FEEL QUITE CLEARLY.

THAT IS THE ONLY THING...

...TO JUST CALL THIS FEELING... "LOVE"?

IS IT FINE FOR ME...

THAT SAID...

...

WELL, I...

...!

I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO PROPERLY PUT IT INTO WORDS, BUT...

I JUST DIDN'T KNOW...

...

...ANYTHING ABOUT HIM. ABOUT RINTARO-KUN.

AND SO...

I HAD THIS URGE INSIDE ME... TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM, I THINK.

BUT...

AFTER THAT POINT...

I MEAN...

IT ALL BEGAN THE DAY HE CHEERED ME UP WHEN I STARTED CRYING AT HIS FAMILY'S BAKERY...

TO TALK WITH HIM MORE.

I FOUND MYSELF... WISHING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIM.

ALL SO THAT...

...WHILE MY HEART WAS RACING IN ANTICIPATION AT THE THOUGHT OF MEETING HIM.

I WOULD DRESS NEATLY AND PUT A LOT OF EFFORT INTO MY LOOKS...

...THINK OF ME AS CUTE.

...HE WOULD HOPE-FULLY...

"WHAT DISLIKES DOES HE HAVE WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD?"

"I WONDER WHAT HE'S INTO..."

"WHAT IS HE DOING ON HIS DAY OFF?"

"HOW TALL IS HE ANYWAY?"

"...FIRST NAME?"

"WHAT'S HIS..."

THAT I'D LEARN SOMETHING NEW ABOUT HIM.

SIMPLY BETTING ON THE SMALLEST CHANCE...

I WOULD GO TO VISIT THERE AGAIN AND AGAIN.

I NEVER FELT THAT WAY TOWARD A BOY.

UNTIL I MET HIM...

...

...I EVER HAD SUCH SPECIAL FEELINGS FOR SOMEONE...

AND SINCE THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME...

I KIND OF... ACCEPTED THE FACT...

...THAT THIS FEELING WAS JUST... LOVE, YEAH.

...I JUST REALIZED MYSELF HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO REALLY FIND AN EXPLANATION FOR IT.

I WANT YOU TO PROPERLY THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT MEANS TO YOU.

WHEN YOU SAY THAT YOU'RE WITH [illegible]-KUN MAKES YOU FEEL SAFE

...I TOLD YOU TO THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN FEELINGS PROPERLY, BUT...

I GUESS I SHOULD APOLOGIZE.

I KNOW...

...WHEN IT COMES TO FINDING OUT WHAT THEY CONSIDER "SPECIAL."

AND TO BE HONEST, EACH PERSON IS DIFFERENT...

EVEN IF YOU CAN'T FIND A SOLUTION RIGHT NOW...

I'M SURE THERE WILL BE A TIME WHEN YOU CAN FEEL WHAT THE RIGHT ANSWER IS.

...OR NOT, IT'S TOTALLY FINE.

SO WHETHER YOUR FEELINGS RIGHT NOW ARE LOVE...

...THAT'S ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS.

AS LONG AS IT'S A CONCLUSION YOU THINK IS RIGHT...

A- ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME?!

YOU'RE... SO CUTE, HEE HEE.

...

Hot, hot...

BUT IF I FOLLOW THAT LOGIC, THEN...

ばた PAP

ばた PAP

...

WHAT I FEEL...

...MIGHT NOT BE LOVE AFTER ALL.

...AND THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE.

SO, KAO-RUKO...

CAN I ASK YOU ONE MORE THING?

SUBARU.

I WANT YOU TO PROPERLY THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT MEANS TO YOU.

WHEN YOU SAY THAT BEING WITH NATSUSAWA-KUN MAKES YOU FEEL AT EASE...

...MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE, AFTER ALL.

HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE...

WHY...

...THINK ABOUT MY FEELINGS MORE?

...WERE YOU SO ADAMANT THAT I...

Chapter 141: Words of Affection

SUBARU...

I WANT YOU TO PROPERLY THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT MEANS TO YOU.

WHEN YOU SAY THAT BEING WITH NATSUSAWA-KUN MAKES YOU FEEL AT EASE...

...MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE, AFTER ALL.

HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE...

WHY WERE YOU...

...SO ADAMANT THAT I THINK ABOUT MY FEELINGS MORE?

...

I KNEW SHE'D BE ASKING ME THAT...!

TO FULLY GET MY POINT ACROSS, I'D HAVE TO TELL HER HOW NATSU-SAWA-KUN PROBABLY FEELS...

WHICH IS WHY I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HOW TO APPROACH THIS FOR THE LONGEST TIME, BUT NOW THAT WE'RE HERE...

WAP!!

W-WELL, YOU KNOW...

I LOVE RINTARO-KUN! AND UM...!

Hūh...?!

I... I KNOW THAT...?

KAORU-KO?

GASP

!!

?!

I TELL HIM THAT AS MUCH AS I CAN...!

AND SINCE... I DO... I...

OH!

AND ALSO!

"BEING WITH YOU HELPS ME RELAX" OR "HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE GIVES ME CONFIDENCE" TOO!

AND NOT JUST THAT!

STUFF LIKE... THAT...

"PLEASE HUG ME!"

...!

PUZZLED

I...I DID...

MAYBE NOT WITH THOSE EXACT WORDS, BUT...

DID YOU... REALLY SAY THAT?

That was so cute!

PSSSHHH

I PANICKED SO MUCH I STARTED RAMBLING...!

HUH?

WHAT YOU SAID TO NATSU-SAWA-KUN... IT SOUNDED EXACTLY LIKE THAT TO ME!

A-ANY-WAY!

TELLING HIM THAT HE MAKES YOU FEEL AT EASE...

IT SEEMED LIKE YOU WERE SAYING THAT... EXACTLY BECAUSE HE'S MORE THAN JUST A FRIEND TO YOU!

...

HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE...

...MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE, AFTER ALL.

I'D NEVER SAY STUFF LIKE THAT. I COULDN'T DO THAT, EITHER.

BUT IF IT'S A RANDOM BOY THAT ISN'T RINTARO-KUN...

I DON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE SAYING THAT TO THE OTHER GIRLS AT ALL.

THINGS LIKE "I LOVE YOU" OR "YOU MAKE ME FEEL AT EASE," YOU KNOW...

...TOWARD ANOTHER GIRL...

IF RINTARO-KUN WERE TO BE THAT AFFECTIONATE...

AFTER ALL...

...I WOULD HATE THAT MYSELF.

AND SO... HEARING YOU SAY THAT MADE ME THINK...

I... SEE...

SHE'S SULKING...

THAT MAYBE...

...YOU ACTUALLY LIKE NATSUSAWA-KUN!

DAZED

ぽかん...

Ah, well...

I MEAN... MORE THAN JUST AS A FRIEND, YOU KNOW!

I ACTUALLY SAID IT STRAIGHT TO HER FACE...!

S-SUBARU, LISTEN... WHAT I MEANT WAS...

W-WAIT!

...WHAT IT SOUNDED LIKE TO YOU?

IS THAT REAL-LY...

J-JUST... HOLD ON...

S-SO, BASICALLY...

...HUH?!

...IS JUST LIKE WHAT YOU WOULD ALWAYS TELL TSUMUGI-KUN...?!

WHAT I SAID...

AND THAT'S NOT EVERYTHING.

...!

...BEING SO ADORABLE AS THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT LOVE AND ROMANCE...

THOSE EXPRESSIONS THE GIRLS HAD...

KAO-RUKO...

WHAT IS SHE PANICKING OVER...?

GRAB

I... LOOKED LIKE THAT...?!

WERE YOU...THE ONLY ONE THINKING THAT...?!

I... I DON'T KNOW...

I THINK MADOKA PROBABLY REALIZED, TOO.

IS...IS IT SOMETHING YOU CATCH ON TO OR WHAT...?!

...!

AS I SAID EARLIER...

I MEAN, TO BE HONEST...

BLINK

TELLING SOMEONE THAT...

...THEY MAKE YOU FEEL AT EASE...LIKE THAT...

IT JUST SORT OF SOUNDS LIKE...YOU'RE DIRECTLY TELLING HIM HOW SPECIAL HE IS TO YOU.

SUBARU?! WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU?!

Earth to Subaru!

Just take a deep breath!

FWMP

I... I THINK I CAN'T... GO ON ANYMORE...

What... What do I even do about this...

NOT ONLY DID I SAY SOME-THING SO... DARING WITH-OUT EVEN REALIZING IT...

TO THINK I EVEN... MIGHT HAVE HAD THAT SORT OF LOOK ON MY FACE WHILE TELLING HIM THAT, TOO...

H-HUH? WHAT LOOK?!

?!

I THOUGHT... WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT THE MEANING BEHIND WORDS SHE USED...

BUT THINGS ARE JUST KIND OF... EXPANDING FROM THERE WITHOUT ANY INPUT ON MY END...!

NO WONDER HE'D BE SURPRISED IF I DID SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

THAT'S WHY NATSUSAWA-KUN MUST HAVE REACTED THAT WAY...

SUBARU...

SURPRISED...?

I guess... Natsusawa-kun managed to play it off and hide his feelings after all...?

I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CONCLUSION THE REST OF US REACHED AFTER SEEING THAT...

Water... I need water...

I MEAN, I HAD NO IDEA RINTARO-KUN FELT THAT WAY ABOUT ME UNTIL HE SAID THAT AT THE BEACH...

THEN AGAIN, REALIZING THESE THINGS YOURSELF TAKES WAY LONGER...

BUT...

THIS... IS NEW.

SO SHE CAN MAKE A FACE LIKE THAT!!

FEELING BETTER NOW?

...YES.

THANK YOU.

FOR... TELLING ME ALL OF THIS AND HELPING ME.

...

THEN, I GUESS...

MY ANSWER RIGHT NOW WOULD BE... "I DON'T KNOW."

YOU SAID THAT THE ANSWER DOESN'T MATTER...

AS LONG AS IT'S ONE I REACHED AND FEEL HAPPY WITH, RIGHT?

BUT...

AFTER ALL...

IF RINTARO-KUN WERE TO BE THAT AFFECTIONATE . TOWARD ANOTHER GIRL . I WOULD HATE THAT MYSELF.

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

...I SHOULDN'T BE SAYING THINGS THAT COULD MAKE HIM MISUNDER-STAND.

IF I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO MY OWN FEELINGS YET...

...SOME MORE THOUGHT.

I'LL GIVE MY FEEL-INGS...

...!

I REALLY APPRE-CIATE IT.

BUT THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME, KAORUKO.

Much easier that way, right?

THANKS.

THEN LET ME TAKE YOUR LUNCH BOX BACK TO THE CLASSROOM SINCE I'M HEADING BACK, TOO.

I'M JUST GOING TO STOP BY THE RESTROOM FIRST.

YOU'RE WEL-COME...

OH, LOOK WHO'S BACK!

3-A

...

WHY, OF COURSE! PIECE OF CAKE FOR THE GREAT MADOKA-CHAN!

TWAK

WHAT ABOUT YOU? DID YOU GET YOUR HOMEWORK DONE?

YEAH...

WHERE'S SUBARU? TAKING AN EXTRA STOP AT THE REST-ROOM?

...

WHAT'D SHE SAY?

...SO? HOW ARE THINGS LOOKING WITH SUBARU?

WHISPER

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO INTER-PRET THAT?!

CAN I GET A COHERENT AND CLEAR ANSWER, PLEASE?!

In the end... It just sort of worked out...?

BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I DID THE BEST I COULD HAVE...

I THINK... I GOT MY POINT ACROSS...

I REALLY AM UTTERLY HELPLESS WHEN IT COMES TO BOYS.

NOT TO MENTION THAT I'M NOT REALLY THE TYPE TO BE AROUND PEOPLE MUCH.

THIS IS... DIFFICULT.

I HAVE TO... TREASURE THIS RELATION-SHIP WE HAVE RIGHT NOW.

HHHHSHH

...

I LOOKED LIKE THAT ?!

...YOU ACTUALLY LIKE NATSUSAWA-KUN!

THAT MAYBE...

BEING SO ADORABLE AS THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT LOVE AND ROMANCE...

THOSE EXPRESSIONS THE GIRLS HAD...

J

...WHEN I SAID THOSE WORDS TO HIM...?

WHAT SORT OF FACE DID I MAKE...

OUR FIRST TERM OF THE THIRD YEAR CAME TO AN END.

AS WE WERE ALL PONDERING ON OUR FUTURES...

...WE ENTERED OUR HIGH SCHOOL LIFE'S FINAL SUMMER BREAK.

GATAK

GOTOK

GATAK

GOTOK

NEEDLESS TO SAY...

< 2022

August

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

1 2 3 4 5 6

7 8 9 10 11 12 13

14 15 16 17 18 19 20

...I'M NO EXCEPTION TO THAT.

21

BUT BEFORE ANY OF THAT...

22

< 2022

July

FWP

Sun Mon

TODAY IS VERY IMPORTANT.

IT'S KAORUKO-SAN'S 18TH BIRTHDAY.

THAT SAID...

I HOPE... SHE LIKES IT.

WELL, I'M SURE SHE'S EXTREMELY BUSY RIGHT NOW.

I'LL JUST DROP BY TO GIVE HER MY PRESENT AND HEAD BACK RIGHT AWAY.

GRIP

ALL RIGHT, YOU TWO.

TAKE YOUR TIME AND HAVE FUN, YES?

TOK

KA

TAK

HOW DID I END UP HERE...?!